



PRESS RELEASE

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**CDC Reports Hepatitis C Rates Increasing
at Alarming Rates
National Response Needed to Battle Infectious Diseases**

Washington DC... As the nation is currently battling one infectious disease, COVID-19, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that another infectious disease caused by a virus, hepatitis C, is increasing at alarming rates and needs immediate attention. In data released today, the CDC estimates that in 2018 there were 50,300 new hepatitis C infections, which represents a three-fold increase in the rate of new infections over the last decade.

The CDC also found that due to the ongoing opioid epidemic and injection drug use, there are now just as many new infections among Millennials as Baby Boomers, who in the past bore the brunt of all new cases. Therefore, the CDC is now recommending that every adult 18 and older be tested at least once for hepatitis C, plus all women during each pregnancy, and those at risk.

“The entire world is learning all too well how to respond to an infectious disease; it takes awareness, surveillance, testing, treatment, financial resources, and eventually a vaccine,” commented **Carl Schmid, executive director** of the **HIV+Hepatitis Policy Institute**. “Responding to hepatitis C will take a similar effort. While we are ahead in some respects for hepatitis C given that we have reliable tests to screen for hepatitis C and drugs that lead to a cure, we are missing critical financial resources to implement education campaigns, widescale testing, surveillance programs, and linkage to cures.”

Currently, Congress only allocates \$39 million to the CDC’s hepatitis prevention efforts, for not only our nation’s response to hepatitis C, but also hepatitis A and B. In recent testimony submitted by the **HIV+Hepatitis Policy Institute**, we urged Congress to increase funding for the CDC’s Division of Viral Hepatitis by \$95 million for a total of \$134 million. We also called for an increase of \$48 million for a total of \$58 million for the CDC’s Eliminating Opioid Related Infectious Diseases program. The increased funding will help ensure that our public health infrastructure, clinicians, and community-based organizations have the resources to implement the new screening recommendations and link more people to curative medications.

The CDC reported today that approximately 40 percent of people with hepatitis C are not aware of their infection. Last year, the CDC estimated that there are 2.4 million people in the United States living with hepatitis C, one of the leading causes of death from liver disease.

In March, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) also updated its screening recommendations for hepatitis C to support screening in all adults aged 18 to 79 years. The **HIV+Hepatitis Policy Institute** hopes that this, in combination with the CDC's new recommendations, will spur a serious effort in our nation to accelerate testing and linkage to curative treatments so that we can eventually end hepatitis C.

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The **HIV+Hepatitis Policy Institute** is a national, non-profit organization whose mission is to promote quality and affordable healthcare for people living with or at risk of HIV, hepatitis, and other serious and chronic health conditions.